

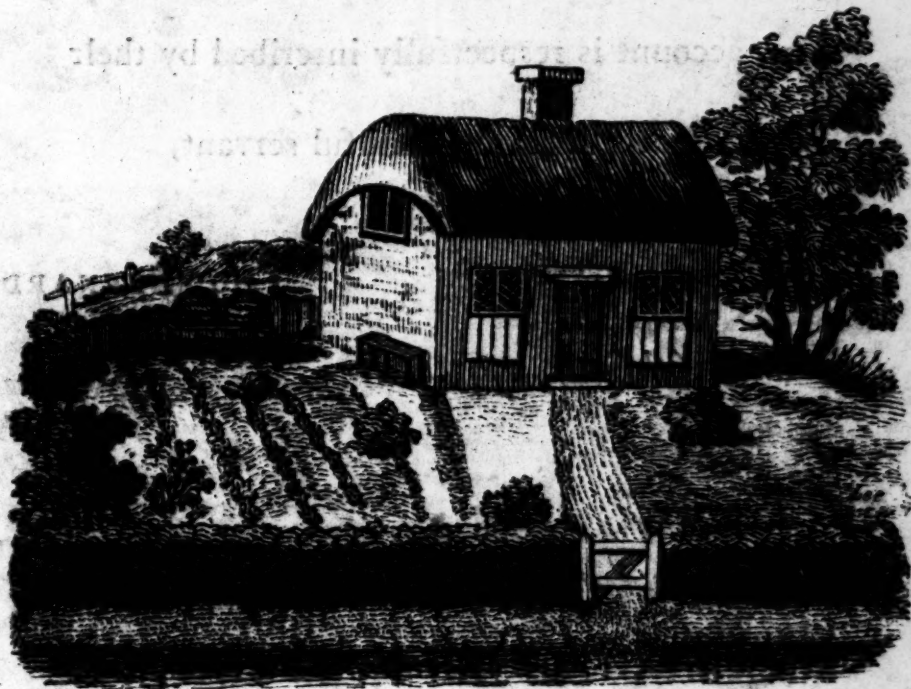
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AN
ACCOUNT
OF A
COTTAGE AND GARDEN,
NEAR TADCASTER.

WITH
OBSERVATIONS

UPON LABOURERS HAVING FREEHOLD COTTAGES
AND GARDENS,
AND UPON A PLAN FOR SUPPLYING COTTAGERS
WITH COWS.

PRINTED AT THE DESIRE OF THE SOCIETY
FOR BETTERING THE CONDITION, AND
INCREASING THE COMFORTS OF THE POOR.



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TO THE SOCIETY

**FOR BETTERING THE CONDITION, AND INCREASING
THE COMFORTS OF THE POOR.**

**This account is respectfully inscribed by their
obedient and faithful servant,**

THO. BERNARD.

Foundling, 16th July, 1797.



ACCOUNT

OF A

COTTAGE AND GARDEN,

NEAR TADCASTER.

Two miles from Tadcaster, on the left-hand side of the road to York, stands a beautiful little cottage, with a garden, that has long attracted the eye of the traveller. The slip of land, is exactly a rood, inclosed by a cut quick hedge; and containing the cottage, fifteen apple-trees, one green gage, and three winesour plum-trees, two apricot-trees, several gooseberry and currant bushes, abundance of common vegetables, and three hives of bees; being all the apparent wealth of the possessor. The singular neatness and good order that marked every part of this little domain, and some circumstances respecting the owner, which had been mentioned to me by Dr. Burgh of York, made me anxious to obtain the history of the cottager and his family. In the end of May, 1797, I called there in my way from York; but found the house and the gate of the garden locked. In the road to Tadcaster, however, I met his wife, laden with a basket of provisions from the market; and engaged her to find her husband, who was at work about a mile off, and to send him to me at the inn at Tadcaster. When he arrived he very willingly gave me his history, as follows:

General account of the cottage, &c.

His name is Britton Abbot; his age sixty-seven, and his wife's nearly the same. At nine years old he had gone to work with a farmer; and being a steady careful lad, and a good labourer, particularly in what is called task-work, he had

His history till the inclosure.

managed so well, that before he was twenty-two years of age, he had accumulated near £.40. He then married, and took a little farm at £.30 a year; but before the end of the second year he found it prudent, or rather necessary, to quit it; having already exhausted, in his attempt to thrive upon it, almost all the little property that he had heaped together. He then fixed in a cottage at Poppleton; where, with two acres of land, and his common right, he kept two cows. Here he had resided very comfortably, as a labourer, for nine years, and had six children living, and his wife preparing to lie in of a seventh, when an inclosure of Poppleton took place; and the arrangements made in consequence of it, obliged him to seek for a new habitation, and other means of subsistence for his family.

He applied to Squire Fairfax, and told him that, if he would let him have a little bit of ground by the road-side, "he would shew him the *fashions* on it." After enquiry into his character, he obtained of Mr. Fairfax the ground he now occupies; and, with a little assistance from the neighbours, in the carriage of his materials, he built his present house; and planted the garden, and the hedge round it, which is a single row of quick, thirty-five years old, and without a flaw or defect. He says he cut it down six times successively when it was young. Mr. Fairfax was so much pleased with the progress of his work, and the extreme neatness of his place, that he told him he should be rent free. His answer deserves to be remembered: "Now, Sir, you have a pleasure in seeing my cottage and garden neat: and why should not other squires have the same pleasure, in seeing the cottages and gardens as nice about them. The poor would then be happy; and would love them, and the place where they lived: but now every little nook of land is to be let to the great farmers; and nothing left for the poor, but to go to the parish."

He has had seven children; six of whom attained to man's estate; and five are now living, and thriving in the world. One is a carpenter at York; another occupies a little

Account of his family, earnings, &c.



farm at Kelfield; a third is the wife of a labourer, who has built a cottage for himself at Tadcaster, and wants nothing (as the father observed) but a bit of ground for a garden. Britton Abbot says he now earns 12s. and sometimes 15s. and 18s. a week, by hoeing turnips by the piece, setting quick, and other task-work: "but to be sure (he added) *"I have a grand character in all this country."* He gets from his garden, annually, about forty bushels of potatoes, besides other vegetables; and his fruit is worth from £.3 to 4 a year. His wife occasionally goes out to work; she also spins at home, and takes care of his house and his garden. He says they have lived very happy together for forty-five years. To the account that I have given, it may be needless to add, that neither he, nor any part of his family, has ever had occasion to apply for parochial relief.

Though my visit was unexpected, and he at the latter end of his Saturday's work, his clothes were neat and sufficiently clean: his countenance was healthy and open; he was a little lame in one leg, the consequence of exposure to wet and weather. He said he had always worked hard and well; but he would not deny but that he had loved a mug of good ale (a) when he could get it. When I told him my object in enquiring after him, that it was in order that other poor persons might have cottages and gardens as neat as his, and that he must tell me all his secret—how it was to be done; he seemed extremely pleased, and very much affected; he said, "nothing would make poor folks more happy, than finding that great folks thought of them:" that he wished every poor man had as comfortable a home as his own; not but that he believed there might be a few thriftless fellows, who would not do good in it.

His appearance,
health, &c. &c.

I asked him whether he had not had a cow. He said he had had one, and she had died; and having no other place but the lane to keep his cow, he had not attempted to get another.—"Could you get land, if you had a cow?"—He

Proposal about a
cow.

(a) See this and the other notes at the end.

thought he could.—“Supposing then (I added) a cow could
 “be bought for £. 12: and you could rent it on the terms
 “of paying down £ 3. 10s. immediately; and then £ 3. 10s.
 “at the end of each year during three years; and that the
 “cow was to be yours at the end of the three years, if she
 “lived, and you paid your rent regularly:—Do you think
 “such a bargain would answer for you?”—Yes, he said,
 he was sure it would very greatly; and there were few
 cottagers, to whom it would not be a very great advantage;
 especially where they had a family of children. I told
 him to enquire whether he could get a little land; and I
 would have some more talk with him about it, when I
 came down in August.

OBSERVATIONS.

The history of Britton Abbot, appears to me to merit
 General view of attention. At the time of the inclosure of
 his history. Poppleton, when he had six young chil-
 dren living, and his wife preparing to lie
 in of a seventh, his whole little system of economy and
 arrangement was at once destroyed; his house, his garden,
 his little field taken from him, and all his sources of wealth
 dried up. With less success in his application for the rood
 of land, the spot in which his industry was to be exerted,
 and (in justice to him it must be added) with less energy
 than he possesses, he might have gone with his family into
 a workhouse; and, from that hour, have become a burthen
 to the public, instead of being one of its most useful mem-
 bers. Observe for a moment the effects of his well di-
 rected industry. Without any parochial aid, he has raised
 six of his seven children, to a state of maturity; and has
 placed them out respectably and comfortably in the world.
 Five of them are now living, in the middle period of life;
 and he continues, at the age of sixty-seven, a good working
 labourer; happy in his own industry and good manage-
 ment; in the beauty and comfort of his cottage, and in the
 extreme fertility of his garden.

Britton Abbot possesses a degree of energy and spirit that

we must not expect to find in every cottager. If, however, the poor do not exert themselves, and have not so much forethought and management as might be wished, the fault is less in them, than in the system of our poor laws, and in the manner in which they are executed. Were they properly and universally encouraged to industry and economy, we should soon find thriving and happy cottagers in every part of the kingdom. Let only a (b) tenth of the money, now spent in workhouses, in what is usually called "*the relief of the poor*," be applied in assisting and encouraging them to thrive and be happy in their cottages, the poor's rate will be lessened, and a national saving made both in labour and food. The labourer is capable of more exertion, and is maintained for less than half the expence, in his cottage, than in a workhouse. In his cottage, he has his family around him, he has something he can call his own, he has objects to look forward to, and is the master of his own actions.—*Domestic connections, property, hope, liberty*, those master springs of human action, exist not in a workhouse.

The cottager should be encouraged to thrive in his cottage.

It is the misfortune of this country, that the well-disposed and industrious poor do not receive sufficient aid or encouragement. They find no distinction made between them and the idle and profligate; except this—that *the idle and profligate are to be maintained in part at their expence*. As the law is too frequently executed, the cottager, though poor himself, is regularly assessed *for the relief of the poor*; but he receives no benefit from the fund, no assistance towards the support of himself and his family, unless he is reduced to absolute want, and presents himself hopeless at the door of the workhouse.

Defects in our system of relief.

This evil has been greatly increased by the ninth of George I. which authorizes the farming of the poor, and refuses relief to those who will not submit to reside in the (c) workhouse. It is in consequence, the interest of the farmer of the workhouse, to keep it in such a condition, that (to use Mr. Parry's words) "*the honest and industrious labourer, who has brought up a large family*"

Increased by the act of Geo. I. as to workhouses.

“with credit, and who, from misfortune is poor; and from age past his labour, will submit to be half starved, rather than take up his abode amidst such wretchedness and profligacy.” By these means workhouses become objects of terror to the honest and industrious; and at the same time the favourite resort of the dissolute and abandoned; the dirt, the waste, the disorder, the want of regulation, and the (*d*) undistinguishing treatment of the worst and best characters, being as gratifying to them, as they are irksome and disgusting to the well disposed poor.

Let us consider what must be the effect of this system on the situation of the cottager.—Tenant to the farmer, who the cottager states. has taken his cottage over his head, he is aware that his new landlord will require as much rent as he can contrive to pay. He has a young and increasing family; and, when times are at the best, he often finds it as much as he can do to go on, from one day to another, in their support. He can hardly expect that, during the severity of the winter, the high price of bread, or the visitation of sickness, his earnings will always, and at all seasons, continue equal to the necessities of his family. If the hour of adversity arrives, he knows the rule of his parish, that “*no assistance is to be given to the labourer, while he possesses any thing of his own;*” and that what, with much labour and much self-denial, he shall have saved, must all be exhausted and spent, before his claim to parochial relief can be admitted. It may be well to consider what incitement he has to thrift and forethought. Can we confidently answer for ourselves that, so circumstanced, we should act even as well, and look as much to futurity, as he does; or that we should not be made mere sensualists by despondency? Is it perfectly clear, that we should not spend every penny, that could be spared from the daily nourishment of our families, in self-indulgence at an alehouse?

Happy should I be, if I could make use of the history of Britton Abbot, to obtain for the labourer encouragement to imitate the energy of his industry. Of the different modes of aiding and animating the poor, none would have more ten-

Want of cottages
for the poor.

dency to raise them above the want of parochial aid, than that of enabling them progressively to follow his example, in such a manner, that the most deserving might in their turn become the owners of comfortable cottages and productive gardens; a measure which seems to be peculiarly called for by the present condition of the dwellings of the poor. It is a melancholy fact that, in (e) most parts of England, their habitations are not only comfortless and devoid of accommodation, but insufficient in number; and that honest and industrious families are frequently driven into the work-house, merely for the want of cottages in their parish.

If the custom of setting apart ground for them to build upon, were to obtain generally, and in a manner to induce and enable them to take the benefit of it, it would assist in gradually correcting this national and increasing

Benefit of giving them sites to build on.

evil, and in supplying that useful class of men with proper habitations.—It would have other very important effects. It would diminish the calls for parochial relief; it would encourage and improve the good habits of the poor; it would attach them to their parishes, and give them an increased interest and share in the property and prosperity of their country. The land required for each cottage and garden, need not be more than a rood; the value of which would bear no possible comparison to that of the industry to be employed upon it. The quarter of an acre that Britton Abbot inclosed, was not worth a shilling a year. It now contains a good house and a garden, abounding in fruit, vegetables, and almost every thing that constitutes the wealth of the cottager. In such inclosures, the benefit to the country, and to the individuals of the parish, would far surpass any petty sacrifice of land to be required. **FIVE UNSIGHTLY UNPROFITABLE ACRES OF WASTE GROUND WOULD AFFORD HABITATION AND COMFORT TO TWENTY SUCH FAMILIES AS BRITTON ABBOT'S.**

In order to encourage the exertions of the labourer, I should hope that this would be conceded to me, that the rood of land, inclosed for his cottage and garden (on condition of a house being erected) be

Exempt from rent and taxes, while the labourer is owner and occupant.

held on fee simple; and that, so long as a parishioner, labouring generally within his parish, continued owner and occupier, such cottage and garden should, by parliamentary authority, be exempt from rent, (f) taxes, rates, tithes, and all burthens whatsoever. It would be an important object to keep these little freeholds in the hands of the labourers of the parish; so that they might be transmitted from father to son, like those little estates, which we contemplate with so much pleasure in Buirodale. If, therefore, the exemption from (g) rent, taxes, &c. continued no longer than while the cottage was both the property and residence of a parishioner, generally working within his parish, it would not be of half as much value to any other person, as to him for whom it was originally intended; and if in some instances they got into other hands, they would soon return again into the possession of the labouring parishioner.

As the means of promoting industry and good conduct among the poor, I should hope that a preference would be given to "industrious parishioners, members of friendly societies;" and that the character of the man, the number of his children, and other circumstances, would induce the farmers to give him the carriage of his materials, and his other neighbours to help him (h) with a pecuniary subscription. The annual sum of £. 10 or 20 so collected in a parish, and impartially and publickly given as a premium to the most deserving labourer in that parish (either to assist him in erecting (i) his cottage, or to enable him to purchase his cow), would produce an incalculable effect on the good habits of the poor; and, while it rewarded merit, would stimulate others to follow the example.

It would have other important effects.—It would greatly diminish parish rates (k); for he, who possesses a freehold cottage and garden, or a cow, has seldom, if ever, occasion to apply for parochial relief. By attaching the cottager to his own parish, it would secure to the farmer a certain supply of labourers, and would equalize, and keep down, the price of labour, now much enhanced by the dis-

position to wander about, in quest of the highest wages and the easiest work ; a disposition which has occasioned a considerable waste in the produce of national labour. But this would not be all. Freehold cottages and gardens, do not only attach the owners to their country, but are also the surest pledges and securities for their conduct. The cottager, who has property, is habituated to set a higher value on himself and on his character, and seems to be of a superior race of men. Besides this, the addition, which these little freeholds might make to the industry, morals, and (1) produce of a country, would be an object of consideration in this respect ; that the cottager, who has a garden and a little property of his own, has always before him *a pleasurable object of industry* for his leisure time : whereas he who has none, is driven to the alehouse by the same *unhappy necessity*, that impels idle young men to the gaming table—the want of occupation.

The outline of a plan for supplying the cottager with a cow, is submitted to the consideration of the publick. Its object is to avoid the two inconveniences that attend the loan of money to the cottager, to enable him to purchase the cow *as his own property*: the one, that if the cow dies, it involves the cottager in debt, almost amounting to ruin; the other, that if the cottager is inclined to knavery, he may sell the cow, and make off with the money. In the mode which I have proposed, the cottager has a gradually increasing interest in the cow, sufficient to make him anxious for her preservation; but not such as either to involve him deeply, in case of her death, or to give him a right of disposing of her. (m) Fifteen pounds would be enough, to constitute, in any parish, a perpetual fund, to supply *annually* the *premium* of a cow, for some industrious and well disposed labourer's family, as long as this aid could be of any applicable use.

On supplying cottagers with cows:

I am presuming, that the land owner shall have been induced to attend so far to his own interest, as to supply the cottager, at a moderate rent, with the means of feeding his cow, wherever it can be done. It will And the means of feeding them;

depend on the circumstances of the country, whether this object is to be attained by annexing ground to the cottages, as has been done by the Earl of Winchilsea, the Earl of Beverley, Lord Brownlow, Sir John Rushout, Mr. Whitbread, and others; or by giving the cottager, at a certain moderate rent, an adjistment for the cow, as Lord Brownlow, and Mr. Morton Pitt, have done; or by the landlord supplying him with pasture and a limited quantity of hay for his cow, at a certain annual rent, as Mr. Burdon has done at Castle Eden; or by making the keep of the cottager's cow, at a limited rent, one of the conditions on which the farmer takes his farm, a method that has been adopted in the county of Lincoln. There is hardly any part of England, however, in which the cottager's cow may not be provided for, by one or other of these means; or by another mode, which I should prefer, when practicable, as the right which it would give the poor man would be *unalienable*; and that is inclosing and improving from the waste, cow pastures of ten or twelve acres each; the exclusive benefit whereof the cottagers of the parish should enjoy at a small rent; which (after providing for fences, &c.) might go as a fund for supplying the poor of the parish with fuel. Such inclosures would be extremely gratifying, and beneficial to that useful class of men, the labouring poor. The stock on them should be limited; and a preference given to labourers working within the parish, in proportion to their families, their industry, and character.

I have only to add, that my friend's history contains in it a strong proof, that, though the cottager is benefited by the supply of a garden and of land for his cow, while he continues a labourer, yet if more land is added, just enough to constitute him *a little farmer*, with a very small capital, and to make him forego his profit and advantage as a labourer, his means of life, instead of being improved by the acquisition of land, are prejudiced. No persons earn a harder or more precarious living, or do less good with their land, than very small farmers. The condition of a labourer, who has a well-stocked garden, a couple of cows, a pig, and just ground

Small farms benefit neither the farmer, nor the publick.

enough to keep them, is affluence compared with the lot of him, who attempts to live as a farmer, on a small quantity of ground, not sufficient to maintain him as a farmer, though abundantly adequate to its object, if divided among several labourers.

NOTES.

Note (a) in page 5.

I have since learnt, that some of his neighbours are more disposed to talk of his love of ale, than of his industry. Perhaps he may have drank a little more, on account of the great quantity of task-work that he has done. He has not, however, the appearance of one habituated to tippling. My visit to him was on a Saturday evening, a time when alehouses are not empty; he was then at hard work. His countenance shews that he has not prejudiced his own health by drinking; and his cottage, garden, wife, and children, all testify, that he has not injured his family by it. His wife spoke of him with much apparent pleasure; while she produced a leg of mutton, and other good things, which she had been purchasing at market for the supply of their larder. If it had been true, that he was a drunkard, it would have shewn still more forcibly, how much the energy of the labourer is capable of, even under so great and *deplorable* a disadvantage.

Note (b) in page 7.

This experiment would be easily tried. Suppose the poor's rate of a parish so applied to be £. 600 a year; and that £. 60 a year of the rate, were to be annually employed in assisting the most industrious and deserving labourers, to become possessors of cottages and cows: I am confident the poor's rate of that parish would be greatly diminished in a few years; probably to half its present amount. The difference between a law that *encourages* the poor to exertion, and one that attempts to *compel* them to it, is, that in the first you have the co-operation of the millions of the people who are to be the objects of the law; in the second, all the labour is thrown on the unfortunate and unsuccessful persons who are to attempt to execute it.

Note (c) in page 7.

An act has been lately passed (in December, 1795), em-

powering the magistrates to order the cottager, under special circumstances, temporary relief at home. It has not, however, been attended to in some districts; and in others, the execution of it is very unwillingly submitted to by parish officers.

Note (d) in page 8.

An English workhouse is the only place upon earth, where the idle have the same allowance of food, and the same accommodation, as the industrious. In the table of diet of the Rosp-house at Rotterdam, there is a great difference made between those who do full work, and those who only work *half-task*. In the establishment at Munich, mere necessities are allowed for those who do not work—for those who do, comforts and luxuries.

Note (e) in page 8.

There are some parts of England, particularly in the northern counties, where the habitations of the poor are very comfortable; and other parts, in which the publick spirit and benevolence of individuals have done, and are doing much to improve them in their own neighbourhood. Picturesque cottages might be so disposed around a park, as to ornament and enliven the scenery with much more effect, than those misplaced Gothic castles, and those pigmy models of Grecian temples, that perverted taste is so busy with: but it is the unfortunate principle of ornamental buildings in England, that they should be *uninhabited* and *uninhabitable*.

Note (f) in page 10.

The exemption from land tax, would create another exemption; that of not having to attend county elections. It might be proper that no settlement should be affected, or varied, by any ownership, or occupation, of these cottages: and that the performance of the condition, by the erection of the cottage, should be certified and recorded at the quarter sessions.

Note (g) in page 10.

The rent should not be less than a guinea a year; to be distributable in fuel among the poor of the parish at Christmas. This would serve at once as a penalty on the intruder, and as a compensation to the parishioners.

Note (h) in page 10.

When a young man in New England has saved a little money towards erecting his house, he applies to his townsmen for assistance: they fix the time, and all of them attend to get the building up. I have known one of those houses erected and covered in, in the course of a few days.



Note (i) in page 10.

The reader will find some valuable papers on cottages, in the late publication of the Board of Agriculture. It appears to me that the expence of them is, in general, estimated at more than they would cost the mere labourer. Something may be deducted for things done by himself, or family, at extra hours, or by some of his neighbours, particularly in carriage; something for materials purchased at an under price, and for favour, which workmen can and will shew the poor, in the price of work done. It seems to be a fact, that they can contrive to build cheaper than the higher classes of life. Of four cottages near Aylesbury, built about eighteen years ago with my permission on the waste, the cost was from £. 20 to 30 each, including the wall of the garden. They are good habitable dwellings.

Note (k) in page 10.

Landlords and farmers, who wish their own poor's rates reduced, would do well to enquire into the amount of the poor's rates in those parishes, where labourers have gardens and cows. One annual rate of sixpence in the pound has proved fully adequate to the relief of the poor in such a parish. See the Earl of Winchilsea's letter on the advantages of cottagers renting land.

Note (l) in page 11.

Productive gardens to cottages would, by the increased consumption of vegetables, make a considerable saving in bread corn: the same observation may be applied to cottagers' cows. Of butter, eggs, and poultry, our markets might have a regular and cheap supply from cottagers.

Note (m) in page 11.

Upon supposition that the price of the cow were £. 12, the donor of such a fund would have to advance £ 8. 10s. the first year, £. 5 the second, and £ 1. 10s. the third; after which the rent of £ 3. 10s. paid for three years, for each cow, would produce, in future, £ 10. 10s. a year; being (with the £ 3. 10s. originally paid by the cottager) £. 2 more than would purchase a cottager's cow every year after. The additional £. 2 a year would, I presume, be sufficient to insure, for the year, the landlord's interest in the cows.—I am not sanguine enough to hope, that every labourer can be so fortunate as to possess a cow, and a cottage and garden of his own; but there would be both benevolence and wisdom in making such a property attainable in all cases by industry and economy, and in holding them out to the Poor as the certain rewards of activity and good conduct.

The reader will find some valuable information in the publication of the Board of Agriculture. It is a pity that the expense of them is so great, and that they would cost the nation more than the things they contain. But the Board is a public body, and it is its duty to publish the results of its inquiries. It is a pity that the Board is not more successful in its efforts to reduce the cost of its publications. It is a pity that the Board is not more successful in its efforts to reduce the cost of its publications. It is a pity that the Board is not more successful in its efforts to reduce the cost of its publications.

Landlords and farmers are both interested in the reduction of the cost of the publication of the Board of Agriculture. It is a pity that the Board is not more successful in its efforts to reduce the cost of its publications. It is a pity that the Board is not more successful in its efforts to reduce the cost of its publications. It is a pity that the Board is not more successful in its efforts to reduce the cost of its publications.

Production of the publication of the Board of Agriculture is a very important matter. It is a pity that the Board is not more successful in its efforts to reduce the cost of its publications. It is a pity that the Board is not more successful in its efforts to reduce the cost of its publications. It is a pity that the Board is not more successful in its efforts to reduce the cost of its publications.

Upon the subject of the publication of the Board of Agriculture, the Board of Agriculture has been very successful. It is a pity that the Board is not more successful in its efforts to reduce the cost of its publications. It is a pity that the Board is not more successful in its efforts to reduce the cost of its publications. It is a pity that the Board is not more successful in its efforts to reduce the cost of its publications.

